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x0x Turkish News for the week ending 27 February 2021

[This is a transcript of the news broadcast on 27 February 2021]

Courtesy of Turkish Radio Hour, producer of the

TURKISH CULTURAL PROGRAM, every Saturday from 2 P.M. to 4 P.M.

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NEWS



Supporters of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during a provincial convention of the governing Justice and Development Party

★ Writing in Al Jazeera, Andrew Wilks reports that the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey is receiving criticism for holding rallies amid the COVID-19 surge.

In recent weeks, the Justice and Development Party has been holding a series of gatherings across the country, most attended by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan either in person or via video call.

However, it is the events in the Black Sea provinces of Rize, Trabzon, Giresun, and Ordu that medical figures and the opposition have particularly criticized.

Turkey began announcing weekly province-by-province infection levels two weeks ago, and the four northeastern provinces have recorded some of the highest numbers.

Sinan Adiyaman, a member of the Association of Turkish Physicians COVID-19 monitoring board, linked the party meetings to infection rate increases.

"You cannot go to a concert, theatre play, or cinema," opposition Good Party member of Parliament Lutfu Turkkan told reporters on Wednesday. "The only social activity that you can go to is the corona conventions of the [Justice and Development Party]," he added.



★ On February 23, 2021, The Economist carried an article titled: "Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have formed a brotherhood of hard power But the bond is brittle."

The article writes:

"The Kremlin has accused NATO of trying to overthrow Vladimir Putin. It has portrayed Alexei Navalny, Mr. Putin's most prominent challenger, as America's agent. It has called the European Union, which condemned Mr. Navalny's poisoning and subsequent imprisonment, an "unreliable partner." But there is one NATO country, and candidate European Union member, that Mr. Putin is happy with: Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's president, has said nothing about the mistreatment of Mr. Navalny or the arrests of thousands of Russians who protested against it."

"Historically, Russia and Turkey have gone to war a dozen times, though not since both empires were transformed in revolution at the end of the first world war."

The article then explains why Erdoğan and Putin are getting along. One of the reasons is that both

leaders claim that enemies are besieging their countries. Turkey and Russia both also express bitterness about being excluded from Europe. The European Union has been putting off Turkish membership for many decades now.

Both Putin and Erdoğan also express nostalgia for the former empires.

Emre Ersen, a Russia expert at Marmara University in Istanbul, says that Russia and Turkey will look for common ground wherever they can, but they will find it hard to reconcile their interests, especially in the Black Sea and the Caucasus, where Turkey's position continues to be closer to the West's than to Russia's.

The article concludes:

At present, Turkey is a country unmoored. It is increasingly estranged from the Western alliance. But its partnership with Russia is recent, thinly based, and reversible. Among the many priorities competing for President Joe Biden's attention, stopping Turkey's drift away from the West and into Mr. Putin's arms, deserves to be near the top of the agenda.

★ According to the Associated Press, a Turkish court convicted an official from a private airline and two pilots Wednesday for involvement in former Nissan

Motor Co. chairman Carlos Ghosn's dramatic escape from Japan in 2019. They each received four years and two months in prison.

The court acquitted two other pilots of the charge of illegally smuggling a migrant. The court acquitted a flight attendant of failing to report a crime, while it

dismissed the case against a second flight attendant.

Read more [>> here <<](#)

★ The United States must recognize legitimate security concerns of Turkey in Syria, commander of the U.S. Central Command General Kenneth F. McKenzie said on Wednesday.

"Turkey is a significant NATO ally, so we are always going to try to find a way to work with them whenever we can," McKenzie said in an interview with the Beirut Institute, a think-tank focused on the Arab region.

The United States was instrumental in creating the Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition of militias dominated by the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units. It spearheads the campaign against the Islamic State.

But Turkey regards the Syrian Democratic Forces as the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which it has been involved in an internal conflict with since 1984.

★ Turkish Security forces captured a senior Islamic State member and rescued a seven-year-old Yazidi girl in Turkey's capital Ankara, sources said on Wednesday.

The terrorist recently arrived in Ankara and was apprehended in a joint operation by the police and the National Intelligence Organization.

The suspect was a former officer of the Iraqi military. He later became a senior operative of the terror group in the northern province of Mosul, the sources said.

Read more [>> here <<](#)



★ Bethan McKernan wrote in the Guardian that "Turkey's mobsters step out of shadows and into public sphere, and After decades in hiding, in prison or keeping low profile, players from a bloody period in the country's history are now seen as 'folk idols' by the Turkish right."

She tells the story of Alaattin Çakıcı, the most notorious mobster in Turkey. Accused of 41 political murders, and jailed for ordering a hit on his ex-wife, who was shot dead in front of their young son, he was nonetheless freed from prison along with dozens of other mafia heavyweights in a coronavirus amnesty last year that notably ignored political prisoners.

Then she tells about violent acts perpetrated by the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Action Party, which is in the coalition government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Last month men attacked a politician, journalist, and lawyer critical of the Nationalist Action Party.

According to Ryan Gingeras, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in California and author

of Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey, however, the political context today is very different.

"The reemergence of real-life mobsters such as Çakıcı doesn't represent a return of the mafia so much as the way in which these men have become folk idols on the Turkish right," he said.

"What these throwback characters do tell us, I think, is that there's a new political environment developing in Turkey – one in which these men have been absolved of their past crimes, and it's becoming clear for the Justice and Development Party that embracing the Nationalist Action Party's hard nationalist stance at the very least doesn't harm their political project. It may even help."

Having alienated most other potential political partners in the last 20 years, and as the Justice and Development Party's popularity continues to wane, the president now has little choice but to stick with Nationals Action Party if he wants to hang on to power.



Buldan and Kılıçdaroğlu

★ According to the daily Duvar, Turkey's main opposition party has said that the recent legal bids to lift the immunity of 25 lawmakers put the

independence of Turkey's judiciary in question.

"There is no independence of the judiciary right

now. Prosecutors are immediately fulfilling [President] Erdoğan's instructions," main opposition Republican People's Party chair Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said.

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party co-leader Buldan said that the ruling Justice and Development Party policies are pushing Turkey into "more disasters."

Claiming it is the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party's

political wing, President Erdoğan's administration often targets the Peoples' Democratic Party.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union.

Scores of Peoples' Democratic Party members, including former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, are currently imprisoned on charges related to the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

★ According to the daily Duvar, a court sentenced a Turkish YouTuber named Porçay to four years and two months in prison because a parody video he created about a Turkish rapper "encouraged drug use."

The 2018 video titled "I Smoke Weed" was about Turkish rapper Ezhel, who often talks about cannabis use in his music, and migrated to Germany after numerous run-ins with the law.

"Porçay was sentenced to prison for a parody video where he tried to show the side of substance use that is not visible in rap music," said the video creator's attorney Ali Gül.

"How can someone get punished for encouraging drug use when he is mocking the glorification of drugs in music?" the attorney added.

★ ECONOMY

★ Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu slammed February 25, 2021, President Erdoğan's insistence on proceeding with the controversial Kanal Istanbul project, saying "Istanbul is bigger than one," the daily Duvar reports.

Mayor İmamoğlu was referring to Erdoğan's motto, "The world is bigger than five." The motto calls for the membership of the UN Security Council to be made more representative.

The Kanal Istanbul project is to connect the Black Sea north of Istanbul with the Marmara Sea to the south. The estimated cost of the project is \$11.6 billion. The government says it will ease shipping

traffic on the Bosphorus Strait and prevent accidents there.

The project, which was effectively on hold after a currency crisis in 2018 drove the economy into recession, came back on the agenda in December of 2019, leading to heated exchanges between Erdoğan and İmamoğlu, seen by many as the prominent contender of the Turkish president in the next presidential elections in 2023.

Istanbulites elected İmamoğlu mayor in a re-run election on June 23, 2019, in what was at the time a blow to Erdoğan and his ruling Justice and Development Party.

★ As agriculture debt in Turkey reaches record highs, many farmers have been calling it quits, Murat Yıldız reports in daily Duvar.

Local farmers feel unsupported by a government focused on importing agricultural products rather than producing them.

The large amounts of debt many farmers have accumulated have made them stop farming altogether. Also, the circumstances are forcing many to sell their land to construction companies.

In the meantime, under the rule of the Justice and Development Party, the agricultural import-export deficit of Turkey has hit 30 billion dollars.

Adana Province Agricultural Engineers Association chairman Feyzullah Korkut told Duvar that until 15 years ago, Turkey was self-sufficient in food production.

In related news, the Turkish Statistical Institute statistics show that growing wheat in Turkey has shrunk by 27% in the past 15 years. Turkey is now a big wheat importer.

★ According to Bloomberg, Turkish banks proposed resuming cash dividends after the banking regulator removed a two-year ban on payouts.

Turkish banking regulator permitted banks last month to pay as much as 10% of 2020 net income as dividends.

★ Nineteen suspects were detained in an Istanbul-centered pyramid scheme that promised members

profits through Bitcoin but robbed victims of millions of liras, Turkish agencies reported on Feb. 26. Read more [>> here <<](#)

★ According to Asharq Al-Awsat, the Turkish lira slid for a fifth straight day on Friday, hit by surging US bond yields that helped erase all the year's gains and set the stage for a potentially more difficult battle against double-digit inflation.

outstripping its emerging market peers.

A measure of investment risk, Turkey's five-year credit default swaps, or CDS, rose by ten basis points to 302 while volatility gauges hit mid-January levels.

It had rallied strongly until mid-February,

Read more [>> here <<](#)

ARTS AND CULTURE

Edited by Selin Taylak and Fuad Tokad

★ In our past news, we have been telling you about the Turkish philanthropist and activist businessman Osman Kavala. The government is holding him in jail without a conviction since 2017. Now the Justice and Development Party administration has been putting pressure on the judges and prosecutors to try him on trumped-up charges.

Mr. Kavala is also an ardent supporter of arts and culture through Anadolu Kültür, the Istanbul-based art nonprofit Kavala established in 2002.

The foundation is a hub of the Turkish art scene, underwriting cultural initiatives to support ethnic minorities in Turkey, sponsoring the Spaces of Culture grant program, and operating the Diyarbakır Art Center and Istanbul's Depo art space.

The government is now alleging that the organization is violating the Turkish commercial code and is trying to shut it down. In response, Anadolu Kültür points that the government's financial crimes investigation unit, the MASAK, found no evidence of wrongdoing in a previous



★ The Istanbul leg of the WOW International Women's Festival will take place online between 5-7 March, Nazan Doğaner Halici of the daily Sözcü reported on February 26, 2021.

WOW festival first started in London in 2010. The Istanbul leg is taking place in partnership with the WOW (Women of the World) Foundation and collaboration with the Sabancı Foundation and the British Council.

The festival theme this year is "Being a Woman in the City." It will have panel discussions, talks, workshops, music, and dance performances.

It aims to make solutions visible against the difficulties women face and for a more egalitarian world. Women supporting women have developed the solutions.

WOW Festival will start on March 5 with talks by the founder and director of the WOW foundation Jude Kelly, British Council Turkey director Cherry Gough, British Council Board Of Trustees Ahead Stevie Spring, and the Chairperson of the Sabancı Foundation Trustees Güler Sabancı.

Speaking about the Festival, Sabancı Foundation Board of Trustees Chairman Guler Sabancı said: "We can not talk about development in a society where women are not strong."

Sabancı added: "The WOW Istanbul Festival is a very important gathering that supports this strength. After a year of pandemic, we have observed that the inequalities faced by women and the problems related to access to rights have deepened much more, and I hope that we will have a meeting where we will inspire each other and get filled with hope."



★ The renovation of Istanbul's Atatürk Cultural Center is about complete, reports the Turkish daily Sözcü.

The renovation of the interiors of the Atatürk Cultural Center is continuing. The work on the façade is 70 % complete, and the renovation of the exterior and the roof is 86% complete.

The center has:

- a total floor space of 1 million sq.ft.,
- four basement and ground floors, and nine floors,
- a 2000 person capacity opera hall,

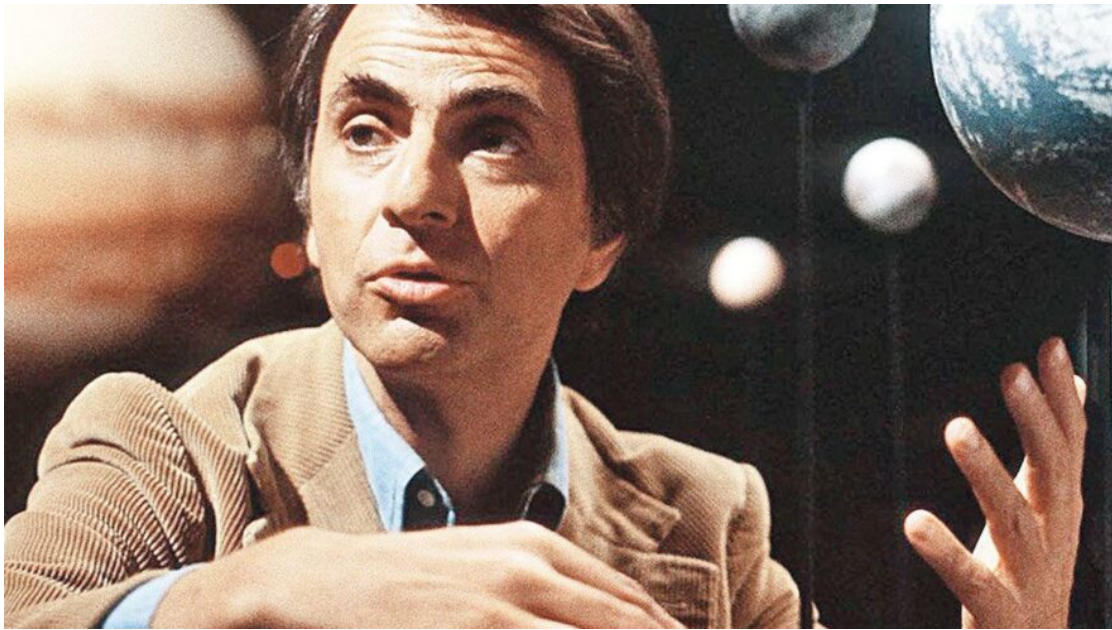
- a 805 capacity theater and music Hall.

Also, it will have a library on music and fine arts, a small music museum, galleries, a multi-functional Hall, pocket movie theater, cafés, and restaurants.

The center will be open 24 hours and be able to accommodate 4000 people.

According to the architect of the project Murat Tabanlıoğlu, the culture center dates back to the 1960s.

Read more [>>here<<](#)



★ Volkan Yazman just translated Carl Sagan and Richard Turco's 1991 book "Nuclear Winter: The end of the arms race" into Turkish.

Nowadays, "Space" is a popular agenda in Turkey and the first name that comes to mind in the world is Carl Sagan, who has sent the voice of Turks into space.

Carl Sagan opened the doors of science to the public with his television series "Cosmos." He also had a book with the same name. His script "Contact" was made into a movie starring Jodie Foster. After

his death, Sagan's relay race is continuing with his wife Ann Druyan and his friends.

Carl Sagan also worked on the Voyager 1 that NASA launched to space 43 years ago and now is 15 billion km away from Earth.

On the Voyager, his friend Prof. Peter Ian Kuniholm recorded a Turkish greeting on the Voyager Golden record containing greetings from around the world in different languages. Prof. Kuniholm taught English in Turkey starting in the 1960s.

★ According to the Turkish daily Cumhuriyet, the 10th Sariyer Theater Festival organized by Sariyer Municipality of Istanbul will open its curtains on February 27 this year.

The festival will stage eight much-liked plays, and they will be online this year due to the pandemic. It will begin on February 27 with *Pull off a Shakespeare*.

The plays will be broadcast on Sariyer TV YouTube channel between 9 PM to 1 AM every Wednesday and Saturday until March 27, 2021.

The Festival program can be reached [Read more >> here <<](#)

The festival will end on March 27 on World Theatre Day.

★ Turkish German director Fatih Akin has been working on a new movie called *Rheingold*. It will be on Kurdish-German rap musician Xatar.

The film is described as a gangster drama and based on Xatar's autobiographical book *All or Nothing*

published in 2015.

The new movie was among the projects that received €700,000 of production support from Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein Film Funding and Berlin-Brandenburg Media Board. With this amount, it became one of the biggest funds-receiving productions this year.

Fatih Akin was born 1973 in Hamburg, Germany, to Turkish parents. He has won numerous awards for his films, including the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival for Head-On (2004), Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival for The Edge of Heaven (2007), and the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film for his film In the Fade (2017).

★ Turkish music student Zelal Aktaş came first in the Golden Classical Music Awards competition held online in New York last month. She performed Elegie by Rahmaninov for the competition, the Turkish daily Cumhuriyet reports.

Zelal is only 15 years old. She is studying at the prestigious Bilkent University on a scholarship.

In addition to her trophy at the New York

competition, she also won first place in the Grand Prize Virtuoso International Music contest held in Germany in October 2020.

After her successes, she received an invitation to perform at the world-famous Carnegie Hall in 2022.

She says her goal is to become a world-renowned composer and a concert pianist.



★ Turkish superstar Aleyna Tilki has teamed with Dua Lipa, Sarah Hudson, Clarence Coffee & Diplo for global Warner Music release, Music Week reports.

She is the first Turkish artist Warner Music signed for international projects.

Now the singer has launched her first English language single with some big names.

Aleyna Tilki - Retrograde (Official Music Video)



EXCHANGE RATE

EXCHANGE RATE for the U.S. dollar in Turkish Liras: 7.42

WEATHER

High and Low Temperatures in Degrees F, Weather

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ankara, in central Turkey | : 48/32 Mostly Cloudy |
| Antalya, on the Mediterranean | : 70/52 Mostly Sunny |
| Erzurum, in Eastern Turkey | : 36/9 Mostly Cloudy |
| Istanbul, in northwestern Turkey | : 48/43 Sporadic Rain |
| Izmir, on the Aegean | : 61/46 Partly Cloudy |
| Trabzon, on the Black Sea | : 55/41 Sporadic Rain |

Snow depths at skiing locations:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Erciyes in Kayseri, Central Turkey | : 17 inches |
| Ilgaz in Kastamonu, North Central Turkey | : 18 inches |
| Kartalkaya in Bolu, Western Turkey | : 70 inches |
| Palandöken in Erzurum, Eastern Turkey | : 45 inches |
| Uludağ in Bursa, Western Turkey | : 30 inches |
| Sarıkamış in Kars, Eastern Turkey | : 31 inches |

SPORTS

Edited by Ertuğrul Korkmaz

★ SOCCER

Premier League

* Results for week: 26

| | | | |
|------------|---|------------|-------|
| Başakşehir | - | Trabzon | 0 - 1 |
| Malatya | - | Konya | 2 - 3 |
| Alanya | - | G. Saray | 0 - 1 |
| Denizli | - | G. Birliği | 1 - 0 |
| Kasımpaşa | - | Karagümrük | 3 - 2 |
| Fenerbahçe | - | Göztepe | 0 - 1 |
| Erzurum | - | Hatay | 1 - 3 |
| Sivas | - | Kayseri | 2 - 0 |
| G. Antep | - | Antalya | 0 - 0 |
| Ankaragücü | - | Rize | 1 - 1 |

* In games played so far this weekend:

| | | | |
|------------|---|------------|-------|
| Konya | - | G. Antep | 0 - 0 |
| G. Birliği | - | Malatya | 1 - 1 |
| Beşiktaş | - | Denizli | 3 - 0 |
| Rize | - | Sivas | 0 - 0 |
| Karagümrük | - | Alanya | 2 - 0 |
| Hatay | - | Ankaragücü | 4 - 1 |
| G. Saray | - | Erzurum | 2 - 0 |
| Antalya | - | Başakşehir | 0 - 0 |

* Standing in the league as of week ending 26

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| 1 - G. Saray | 57 |
| 2 - Beşiktaş | 54 |
| 3 - Fenerbahçe | 51 |
| 4 - Trabzon | 48 |
| 5 - Hatay | 45 |
| 6 - Alanya | 42 |
| 7 - G. Antep | 40 |
| 8 - Karagümrük | 40 |
| 9 - Antalya | 34 |
| 10 - Göztepe | 32 |
| 11 - Sivas | 32 |
| 12 - Konya | 31 |
| 13 - Malatya | 31 |
| 14 - Kasımpaşa | 29 |
| 15 - Rize | 28 |
| 16 - Kayseri | 25 |
| 17 - Başakşehir | 25 |
| 18 - Erzurum | 25 |
| 19 - Denizli | 21 |
| 20 - G. Birliği | 21 |
| 21 - Ankaragücü | 20 |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

[Saat 14:30 and 15:30 'da iki kez okuyun]

*** LaLe restaurant on Irving St. in San Francisco is giving our listeners 15% off! Call them at (415) 566-8814

*** Van Ness Cafe Gyro in San Francisco, is giving our listeners 25% pandemic discount off! Call them at (415) 589-7900

*** Alpiny Design is available for the design of your dream home, with designers with decades of experience. Call them at (408) 431-7987

*** Hairpro Turkey, where you can get the best and most affordable hair transplantation done, is one of our underwriters. Contact them through their web pages: <https://www.hairproturkey.com/>

*** Turkish American Association of California

is a non-profit
charitable organization established to promote better
understanding between Americans and Turks.

if you have any questions about Turks and Turkey,
e-mail them at taac@taaca.org

*** Azerbaijan Cultural Society of Northern California

Organizes many events throughout the year. Follow their activities through
their web pages, or subscribe to their e-mail list by sending an email to:

secretary@acsnc.org

acsnc.org/

Location:

Azerbaijan Cultural Society of Northern California
16400 Lark Ave., Suite 260
Los Gatos, CA 95032

*** Turkish schools in the Bay Area are starting:

There are currently three schools:

Los Altos, San Ramon and Berkeley

For more information on these schools, drop an email to trh@turkradio.us.

*** Turkish Folk Dancing with TUFOD in the South Bay

Join TUFOD as a family! For more information on the venue and hours drop us an email,
we'll put you in touch with them: trh@turkradio.us

Or visit their web pages at <https://www.tufod.org/>

*** Heart to Heart Anatolia

Providing scholarships and bringing people together while promoting Anatolian cultural values

Visit their pages at h2ha.org/

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